Gedankengewicht

> *The meaning of the world does not reside in the world.*

A little over half a year ago, I discussed metaphysics with Aarvoll. Before that talk, for months, I've been taking the topic seriously as a real area of investigation and trying to come up with my own metaphysical system based off of other philosophers' ideas. But I was struggling. I was unsure whether I had a grasp on the topic or if there even was something to be grasped in the first place. I entered that discussion with the hope that Aaarvoll would provide me with answers. At the end of it, I was leaning decisively toward answering the second question in the negative, and I've been leaning more and more in that direction ever since.

Metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics are said to be the three main components that make up a philosophical worldview. With metaphysics out of the picture and having never found ethics of much interest, I am down to the last third, epistemology. Can such a truncated worldview still be of any philosophical value? Let's find out.

Here's the abridged version of the epistemological model proposed by Blithering Genius (BG), as I understand it:

> Conscious living consists of awareness and will. We move our physical bodies through the world and manipulate objects within it, i.e., entities that appear to us as distinct from each other and from us. Conscious beings have brains that contain embodied knowledge of the natural laws that govern their immediate environments and of the limitations the laws impose on them. This implies a particular perspective, an understanding on the part of the being that the "in here" is different from the "out there", which can be summed up as the subject/object distinction. Perception (input from the world) and action (output into the world) interact in a continuous dialectical loop. You look around you, decide what's to be different from what is, and then act to bring that change into existence.
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> Over time, the conscious being collects information, forms patterns based on experience, and learns how to combine what has been previously learned into new concepts. This is interconnected with evolved mental faculties, like the ability to reason abstractly, to remember the past and to plan ahead, and to think and behave rationally. All of this is accomplished by representing the world around us, our place within and our relation to it. In this way, knowledge is built from the ground up; from a network of small muscle movements toward their end goals and corresponding emotional associations, greater theories are formed.

I believe this is a solid model, especially on Wednesdays when my blood alcohol level is relatively low. Someone else might disagree and have an alternative model at hand. The question of which model is superior cannot be answered by presenting single-point arguments, as is usually attempted, because all any number of syllogistic arguments can do is tell you about the assumptions of the person providing them. Every conclusion is baked into the premises, which is demonstrated time and time again when the opposition simply rejects one or more of the premises and deems the argument refuted. A better approach then

is to compare the models in terms of their explanatory virtues. The best way to evaluate which model of epistemology is superior is to consider which

a) has the fewest assumptions while

b) giving the most explanatory power at the same time.

The reason is that otherwise you would end up with a model that makes unnecessary assumptions or cannot explain all of the data. So nothing can beat solipsism in terms of the number of its assumptions as there is just one: I exist and I experience. However, it doesn't have much (or you could even say any) explanatory power - why do you experience the stuff you experience? Why are you constantly encountering concepts that you do not understand and/or ideas that are new to you if you are the author of everything that exists, etc.? So by positing that there are other minds in existence in addition to your mind you've made additional assumptions but you've gained so much explanatory power that on balance it is worth it.

So far, we have an example of a model and a meta-theory of how to compare models. But how does this work in practice?

Let's say we have a run-of-the-mill Christian theist on one side and BG on the other arguing about whose model is more correct. To simplify things, let's say both the Christian and BG agree on every single datum that is to be explained, all they disagree about is how to explain them. The Christian invokes God because he cannot conceive of the world and the passage of time, his past achievements and future plans, his friends' and family's existence, his love for his spouse and children, his values and morals, the books he has read and music he has listened and liked, without God. But BG can conceive of all those things without this addition and relies on natural explanations that are based in biological and cultural evolution and human psychology. For the Christian, God exists. For BG, he doesn't. According to the proposed meta-theory, BG's model would be superior. It possesses the same explanatory power, but has one fewer object that needs to account for, namely God (or more broadly, the realm of the supernatural). BOOM, age-old question resolved. But is it? Of course not, because the theist will simply deny that the atheist has satisfied his requirements for explanation. And he's right, because to satisfy the theist's requirements, the atheist would have to affirm god's existence, or in other words, become the theist. They disagree because they are not the same person.

In conclusion 10 commandments,

1. There is no objective truth.
2. Truth is cashed out in bodily desires.
3. Each subject is the final judge of what is subjectively true for the subject.
4. Each subject is the final judge of what he values.
5. All definitions, models, and meta-theories have to be agreed on in order to make progress in conversation.
6. God cannot force people to agree of definitions.
7. We can disagree on the answer but we have to agree on the question. In other words, we have to agree on the rules by which we play the game. You can't make dinner if you don't know what food is. You can't

do astronomy if you don't know whether planets exist. You can't do Euclidean geometry if you don't hold to the axioms that delineate Euclidean geometry.

8. From 7: What is true in a particular context can therefore be decided on a local, societal level and could theoretically be decided on the level of the entire species.
9. It is unclear to what extent the presuppositions of human thought can be discarded, e.g., can it be doubted that the doubter does not exist?
10. Play Disco Elysium